



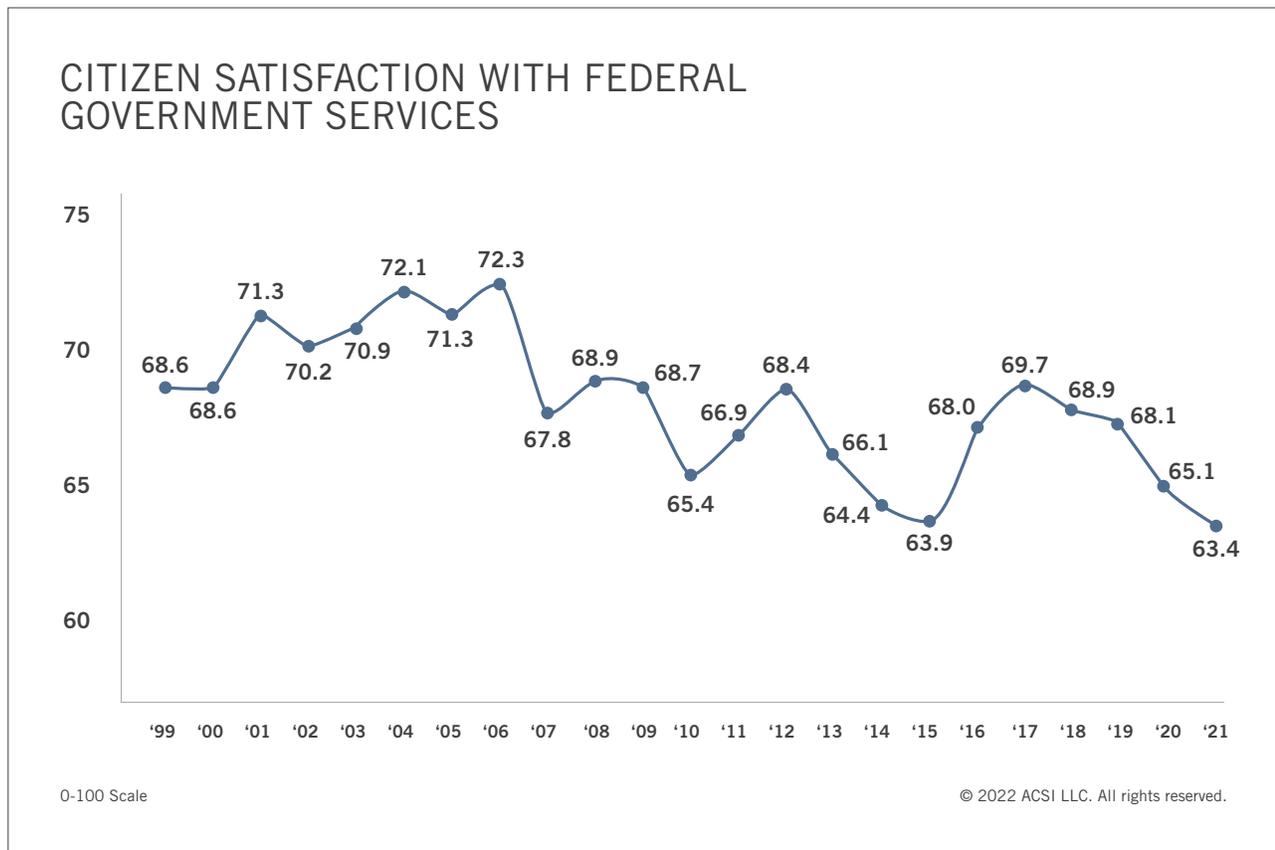
American Customer Satisfaction Index

# AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX *Federal Government Report 2021*

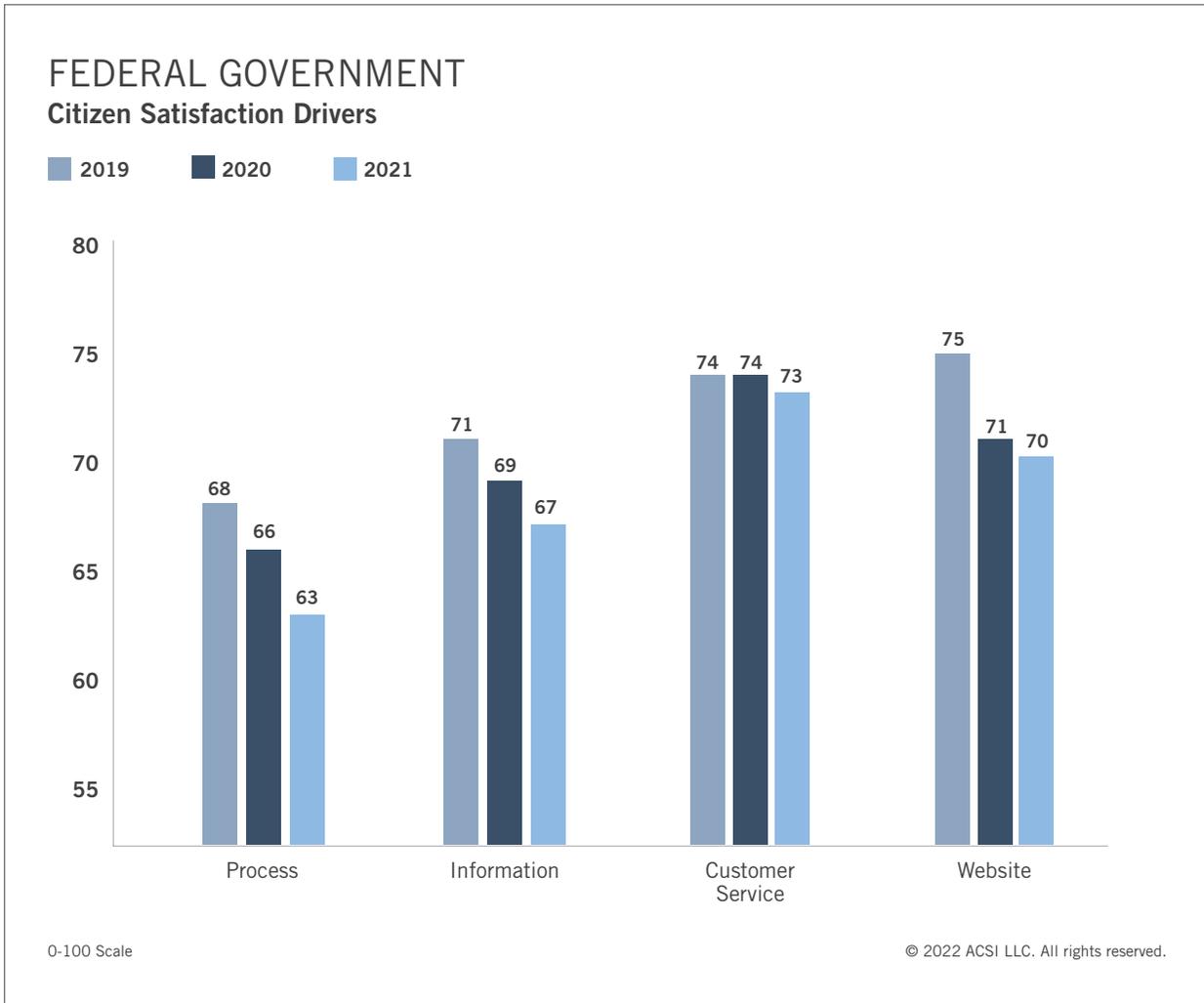
January 25, 2022

## Citizen Satisfaction With Federal Government Services Drops to All-Time Low

Citizen satisfaction with U.S. federal government services declines sharply in 2021, down 2.6% to 63.4 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index's (ACSI®) 100-point scale. This is the fourth consecutive annual decline in citizen satisfaction and marks an unprecedented run of negative movement in the index. Significantly, the federal government score is now at its lowest-ever recorded level. The results for this study are based on interviews with citizens who experienced a federal government service throughout 2021. All of these interviews were conducted during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and amid the fallout from the contentious 2020 federal elections—two events that strongly impacted many citizens' perceptions of the federal government.



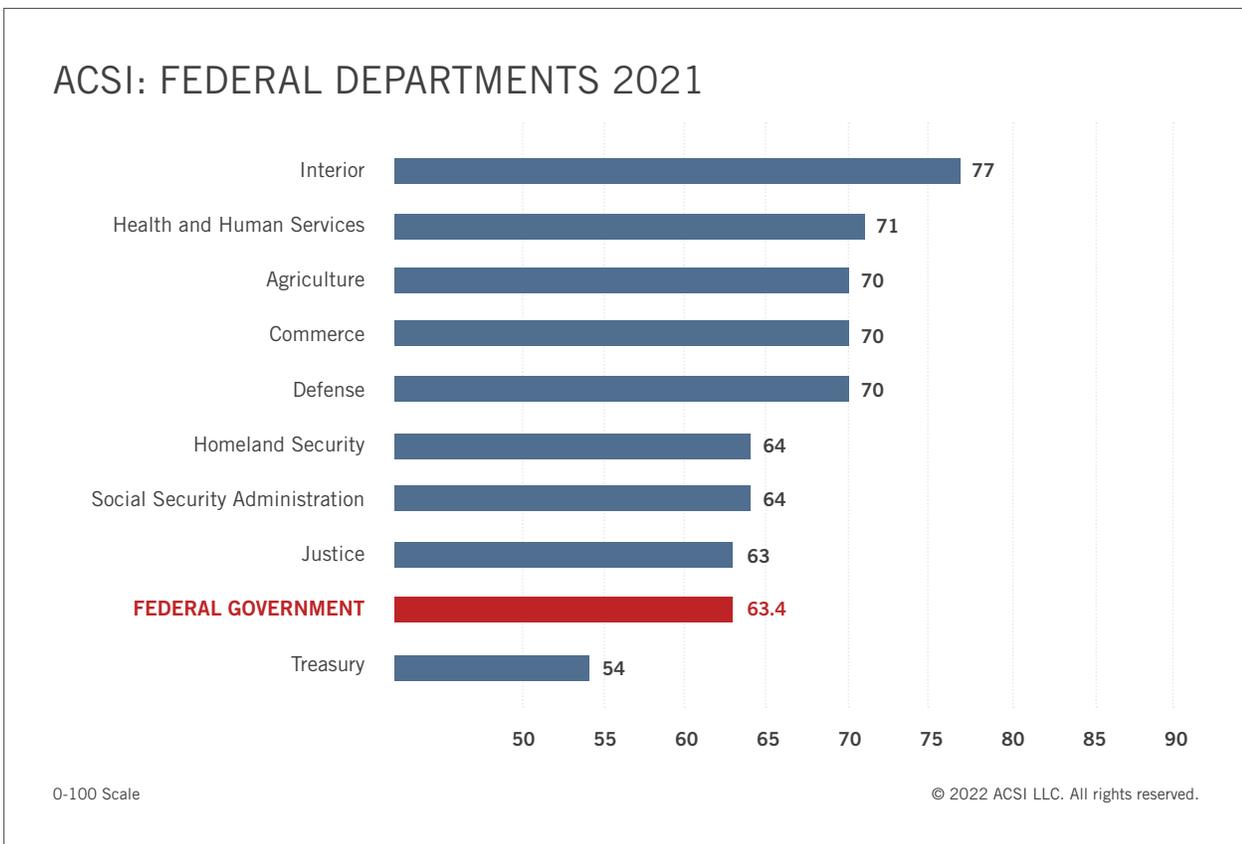
The ACSI federal government model measures four primary drivers of citizen satisfaction that are quality attributes which represent the most relevant performance areas of government agencies and services. Among these drivers of satisfaction, all four decline between 2020 and 2021: efficiency and ease of government processes (-5% to 63), ease of accessing and clarity of information (-3% to 67), the courtesy and professionalism of customer service (-1% to 73), and perceptions of government website quality (-1% to 70). Collectively, these declines represent a broad erosion of the quality of federal government services experienced by citizens in 2021.



## Citizen Satisfaction Across Federal Departments

The ACSI federal government citizen satisfaction score represents an aggregation of citizen experiences with dozens of widely used programs and agencies that are part of different citizen-facing federal departments. Some provide benefits or free/low-cost services experienced by citizens, while others are predominantly regulatory by nature, monitoring citizen compliance with federal rules, regulations, and laws. Given this, citizen satisfaction tends to differ widely across federal departments. The significant variance among federal departments is largely explained by the nature of their missions.

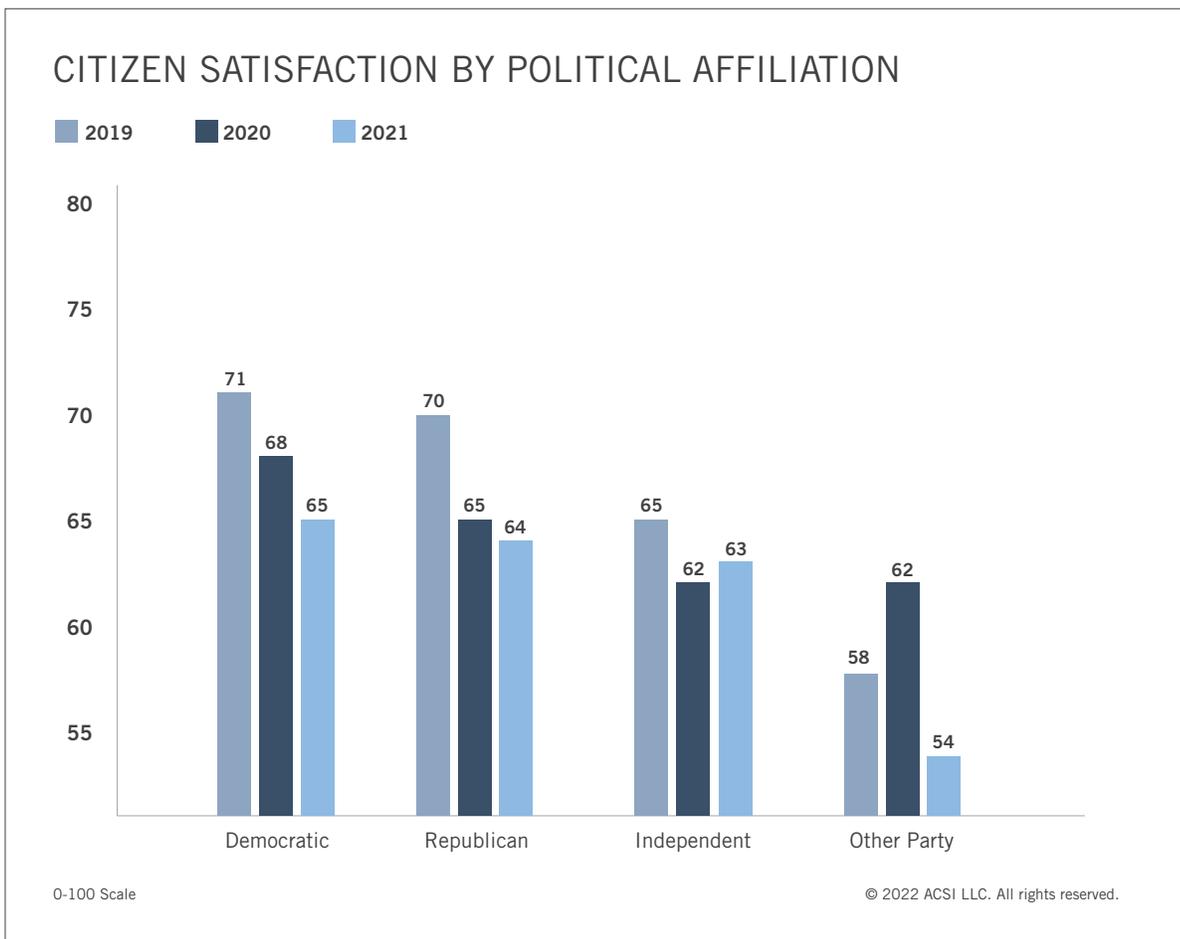
In 2021, the Department of the Interior (77) leads the way in citizen satisfaction and is the only federal department that exceeds the economy-wide national ACSI average (73.7 as of the third quarter of 2021). Four other departments—the Department of Health and Human Services (71), the Department of Agriculture (70), the Department of Commerce (70), and the Department of Defense (70)—score in the 70s but significantly below the national ACSI average. The remaining departments come in well below this mark. Perennial laggard the Department of the Treasury (54), which interacts with citizens primarily through its inherently unpopular tax collection mission, places dead last.



## Citizen Satisfaction Across Political Parties

The ACSI federal government study does not measure public approval of specific politicians or political parties. As such, the survey items do not ask respondents to rate individual politicians, political ideologies, or governmental policies. Instead, the survey focuses exclusively on assessing the quality of the services delivered by specific departments and agencies. Nonetheless, political party affiliation is likely to influence citizens’ assessments of the government services they receive as ACSI data show that party affiliation impacts a wide variety of citizen perceptions. This includes perceptions about seemingly “apolitical” factors such as scientific evidence and objective measures of government performance.

Looking at year-over-year trends from 2020 to 2021 by party affiliation, both Democrats (-4% to 65) and Republicans (-2% to 64) show declines in citizen satisfaction. The relatively small group of “Other Party” supporters (-13% to 54) also expresses much lower satisfaction in 2021 although this group’s smaller sample size yields greater year-to-year variability. Only Independents who indicate no political party affiliation (+2% to 63) show a small increase in satisfaction for 2021. Nevertheless, the broad decline in citizen satisfaction across all respondents who indicate a political affiliation—including Democrats, Republicans, and Other Party supporters—reinforces the existence of a widespread erosion in the perceived quality of government output across citizens.



## About This Report

The *ACSI Federal Government Report 2021* is based on interviews with 2,387 users, chosen at random and contacted via email throughout the year. Respondents are asked to evaluate their recent experiences with federal government services.

The survey data are used as inputs to ACSI's cause-and-effect econometric model, which estimates citizen satisfaction as the result of the survey-measured inputs of expectations and perceptions of the quality of government services. The ACSI model, in turn, links citizen satisfaction with the survey-measured outcomes of complaints and citizen trust in government. ACSI government clients receive confidential agency and best-in-class data on all modeled variables.

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